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2

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Phone: (703) 351-7676

7 February 1985

Mr. William German
Executive Editor
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
901 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Bill:

My attention has been invited to the 30 January 1985 "briefing" section of the CHRONICLE entitled "What's Wrong with U.S. Intelligence Agencies?"

Had the CHRONICLE taken the time to determine if CIA was responding to the two critical articles the section contained, it would have received the attached items. One is my response to Allen Goodman's article, which will appear in the next issue of FOREIGN POLICY. The other is Director Casey's response to John Horton which appeared in the Washington POST on 31 January 1985.

I hope that you will give these two Agency rebuttals the same prominence in the CHRONICLE you gave to the misleading Goodman and Horton articles themselves.

Sincerely,

George V. Lauder
Director, Public Affairs

Attachments

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ON PAGE E1
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30 January 1985

BRIEFING

WHAT'S WRONG WITH U.S. INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

The problems that plague the intelligence community are so deeply rooted that only fundamental changes can improve performance

BY ALLAN E. GOODMAN

The recent campaign for the White House marked the third straight presidential election in which the American intelligence community's performance was a major issue.

From their memoirs it is clear that Presidents Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski all felt often thinking intelligence had not served them well.

Moreover, even since the debacle in Iran the Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence have been sharply critical of the substantive briefings they have received from the intelligence agencies. Fragmented, fossilized collection technologies have actually impeded the sharing of information. And rival agencies in staff competition for financing prepare such divergent analyses that top officials fail to provide enough access, timely, or composite information to policy-makers.

Unfortunately, such problems have plagued the intelligence community for more than a decade and are so deeply rooted that only fundamental change in the system will improve performance.

Intelligence Failures

The quality of intelligence provided by the community has been seriously questioned for some time. There have been at least 20 alleged intelligence failures investigated by Congress or the press since 1962.

Since the White House has not permitted the director of central intelligence to comment on unofficial versions of the CIA internal report, the manner of discussion is not known and therefore it is impossible to compose a truth record.

But it is not reasoning that the failures' gross patterns and chronology of them involved issues and threats of major strategic, diplomatic or economic importance to the United States.

American intelligence has frequently underestimated Soviet behavior and capabilities — targets of highest priority. U.S. intelligence erred, for example, about the Soviet threat to American U-2 reconnaissance flights in 1960.

It failed to predict Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's deployment of offensive missiles to Cuba in 1962, the moves to Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov; the level of Soviet defense spending; and Soviet industry's ability to change production, continue ground or NATO missiles with penetration comparable to America's in five years.

The intelligence community also bungled the questions of the origins and intentions of the Soviet combat brigade "discovered" in Cuba in 1979. Such misjudgments have all been extremely costly to U.S. security. Some of these failures led to major crises, like the Cuban missile crisis; others, such as the underestimate of the Soviet nuclear buildup, led to complacency about America's own arsenal and the need to modernize it.

U.S. intelligence agencies also have failed to anticipated military attacks and to identify tactics and targets in limited wars. The intelligence community has rarely predicted correctly the use of force by one state to achieve its aims over another.

These failures include the North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950; the risk to the USS Liberty of Israeli air attack if the ship continued a surveillance mission during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war; the risk to the USS Pueblo of its surveillance activities near North Korean waters in 1968; the objective of the Tet offensive in Vietnam in 1968; the 1973 Arab-Israeli war; the Argentine seizure of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) and the subsequent British sinking of the Argentine cruiser Belgrano; and the efforts by Iran and Iraq to destroy each other's oil fields and export facilities since the Persian Gulf war broke out.

In each of these cases, ill-conceived or mistaken policy also was at fault. But to blame the policy-maker for the failure, as many intelligence professionals have done, would be a serious mistake.

However the policy-makers reached their conclusions, they were misled by faulty intelligence analysis or poorly served by the slow or incomplete dissemination of reports by the intelligence community.

The Iran Debacle

The most hotly debated intelligence failure of the 1970s was the Iran debacle. Actually, a series of failures along with a vacillating policy toward the shah led to the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in November 1979 and destroyed vital American economic and security interests in the region.

To be sure, as the commission who completed the CIA's postmortem on Iran later discovered, not a single person in or out of government foresaw the ascent of Ayatollah Khomeini. Revolutions have rarely been predicted correctly, but U.S. intelligence agencies and their analyses failed even to sense crisis.

The episode caused Jimmy Carter to send the following handwritten note to then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Brzezinski, and then director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Stansfield Turner:

"To Cy, Zbig, Stan — I am not satisfied with the quality of our political intelligence. Assess our sources and, as soon as possible, give me a report concerning our abilities in the most important areas of the world. Make a joint recommendation on what we should do to improve your ability to give me personal information and advice."

At the senior level, new priori-

See Page 3

As early as 1982, the Reagan administration's disappointment was underscored by Admiral Bobby Inman, the country's most senior and respected career military intelligence officer and deputy director of central intelligence until 1982.

Inman told several audiences that the U.S. intelligence community's performance was at the worst level since Pearl Harbor.

And in the wake of the recent terrorist bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, President Reagan himself expressed concern about "the near destruction of our intelligence capability," while presidential spokesman Larry Speakes blamed on "a decade-long trend of a climate in Congress that resulted in inadequate funding and support for intelligence-gathering operations."

Intelligence and foreign-policy professionals should take such criticism seriously, despite the political overtones and analyses that may have generated it.

Many intelligence operatives have left the profession wondering if the community has become

When Pressure Forces a CIA Officer to Quit

BY JOHN HORTON

Last year I resigned as National Intelligence Officer for Latin American because of the pressure put on me by the director of central intelligence — William Casey — to come up with a National Intelligence Estimate on Mexico that would satisfy him.

This is not the first time that pressure has been put on intelligence officers to come up with what their superiors consider to be the right answers.

A previous director not long ago remarked that he was considered a "traitor" because the estimate on Southeast Asia that were being written under his direction were not pleasing to the policy-makers at the time — the estimate didn't say that our policy in Vietnam was working.

In my own case, it was not that the policy-makers were putting pressure on the director, but rather that the pressure on me and others working on the Mexico estimate came from the director himself.

Nothing will get an intelligence officer's back up faster than a whiff of that kind of pressure in his nostrils. It is a matter of principle that he not slant intelligence judgments to make them more palatable to his superiors or to flatter the glory of approval on an administration's policies.

A National Intelligence Estimate is not simply an intelligence report or a bit of analysis; nor should it be any one man's opinion. It is the product of the deliberations of representatives of all the intelligence agencies dealing with foreign affairs.

As a member of the National Intelligence Council, the national intelligence officer chairs the writing of the estimate. This does give him more influence than one of the representatives from CIA, from State or Army or Navy or Air Force or the Marines, or from the Defense Intelligence Agency. It may not.

But the result should reflect the views of all the agencies and differences in those views. It is not or should not be blandly unanimous, and it should reflect dissents as well as disagreements.

In 1978, a distinguished intelligence officer, in testifying before the Senate, spoke of the "natural tension" between intelligence officers and policy-makers and said, "Policy-makers must assume the integrity of the intelligence provided and avoid attempts to get materials suited to their tastes."

Much has been said — and no doubt much more will be said — about the motives of policy-makers for disputing or slanting the intelligence they receive. The point to understand and to accept is that this has happened in the past, and it can be expected in the future.

Strong-minded officials often think they know better than intelligence officers. Attempts to squelch displeasing intelligence reports or judgments that don't back up an administration's policies have a non-partisan precedence.

William Casey, the current director, need differ from previous directors of central intelligence in that he is a part of the policy-making group where Central American is involved as much as he is the president's chief intelligence officer. His particular case has led to talk of a bill to remove the selection of future directors from the career services to prevent politicians being put in the job.

That may appeal to an intelligence officers who have an unfamiliar respect for our own system, but no legislation can ensure that a director, no matter how experienced in our wars, will not buckle under pressure.

We should from the experience that even men of good will and integrity may be unaware of opinions they remember to be wrong or inconvenient. A taste of power may make us arrogant. The natural tension will continue.

If we accept this as inevitable, our aim should be to soften the collision. I propose that we do so through a more informal council of elders — a tribal council — to act as the public researchers, since intelligence workers cannot by their nature be thrown open to public scrutiny and since the early discussion of policy does not benefit from speech-making.

The council would sit with the director when he is badgered by the politicians, and be heard when temptation beckons him from the path of duty, and, talk quietly with other parties to see if the differences in issues or major and to sound warnings if the route to be run seems not worth the candle.

The council would be made up of members of the four different organizations already charged with the task of examining the performance of the intelligence community and of the CIA in particular.

In the CIA there is an Office of the Inspector General that reports the agency and acts as an ombudsman for employees' complaints. The President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board is made up of private citizens appointed by the president.

Two other organizations charged with oversight of the intelligence community are the Senate and House intelligence committees. The informal exchange of information and views among these groups would provide an immense improvement.

What would begin as a pragmatic approach to supporting the integrity of the intelligence process could benefit from the participation of officials from State, from Defense.

Good intelligence is vital to our security. Our discussion of foreign and defense policy matters gruesomely from partisan caricatures and simplifications. Such a tribal council could build bridges over party chasms, define real differences and increase the area of consensus that seems so far from our grasp today.

John Horton was a CIA operations officer from 1948 to 1975 and served on the National Intelligence Council from May 1982 to May 1984.

GREAT DECISIONS '85

Starting Next Week

This year marks the 41st year of the Great Decisions program, sponsored nationally by the Foreign Policy Association. Next week is the beginning of the Great Decisions '85 program, which consists of eight weekly meetings to encourage throughout America informed discussion of U.S. foreign policy issues.

Starting next week, subject material related to the weekly Great Decisions topic will run in the Briefing section. The subject for discussion the first week will be "Revolutionary Cuba: Toward Accommodation or Conflict?"

Great Decisions '85 is sponsored locally by the World Affairs Council of Northern California in cooperation with the Foreign Policy Association, a non-governmental, non-partisan organization. Issues is to stimulate citizen participation in world affairs.

Participants in Great Decisions will record their views in opinion ballots distributed at the weekly meetings. The ballots will be tabulated and circulated to members of Congress and the executive branch.

Discussion groups are still being formed and telephone reservations for the weekly lectures are being accepted. Information on Great Decisions '85 can be obtained from the World Affairs Council, [illegible], phone [illegible].

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